



# ACNE

## *What Causes It & What You Can Do About It*

Acne is a disorder that affects the skin's oil glands and hair follicles. The small holes in your skin (pores) connect to oil glands under the skin. These glands make an oily substance called sebum. The pores connect to the glands by a canal called a follicle. Inside the follicles, oil carries dead skin cells to the surface of the skin. A thin hair also grows through the follicle and out to the skin. Sometimes, the hair, sebum, and skin cells clump together into a plug. The bacteria in the plug cause swelling. Then when the plug starts to break down, a pimple grows.

Most pimples are found on the face, neck, back, chest, and shoulders. Acne is usually not a serious health threat, but it can cause scars.

Anyone can get acne, but it is most common in teens and young adults. An estimated 80 percent of people between ages 11 and 30 have acne outbreaks at some point. Hormone changes during puberty, before a woman's monthly period, or after starting or stopping birth control

can cause acne outbreaks.

There are many types of pimples. The most common types are whiteheads, which are pimples that stay under the surface of the skin and blackheads, which pimples that rise to the skin's surface and look black (the black color is not from dirt).

### **WHAT CAUSES ACNE?**

Doctors don't know what causes acne, but taking care of your skin can prevent outbreaks from becoming worse. Doctors think certain things play a part:

- » Changing hormone levels
- » Taking certain medicines
- » Wearing greasy makeup
- » Heredity



There are many myths about what causes acne. Dirty skin and stress do not cause acne. Also, chocolate and greasy foods do not cause acne in most people.

For those who have acne, some things can make it worse:

- » Pressure from bike helmets, backpacks, or tight collars
- » Pollution and high humidity
- » Squeezing or picking at pimples
- » Hard scrubbing of the skin
- » Stress

### IS THERE A CURE FOR ACNE?

Over-the-counter or prescription drugs may treat acne by healing pimples, stopping new pimples from forming, and preventing scars. Some medicines are put right on the skin, while others are pills that you swallow. If you have severe acne, you may need to see a dermatologist, a type of doctor that specializes in treating skin problems. Several types of health care professionals may treat acne, however, including general or pediatric physicians.

### SELF-CARE FOR ACNE

Here are some ways to care for skin if you have acne:

- » **Clean skin gently.** Use a mild cleanser in the morning, evening, and after heavy workouts. Scrubbing the skin does not stop acne; it can even make the problem worse.
- » **Try not to touch your skin.** People who squeeze, pinch, or pick their pimples can get scars or dark spots on their skin.
- » **Shave carefully.** If you shave, you can try both electric and safety razors to see which works best. With safety razors, use a sharp blade. It also helps to soften your beard with soap and water before putting on shaving cream. Shave lightly and only when you have to.
- » **Stay out of the sun.** Many acne medicines can make people more likely to sunburn. Being in the sun a lot can also make the skin wrinkle and raise the risk of skin cancer.
- » **Choose makeup carefully.** All makeup should be oil free. Look for the word “noncomedogenic” on the label. This means that the makeup will not clog up your pores, but some people still get acne even if they use these products.
- » **Shampoo your hair regularly.** If your hair is oily, you may want to shampoo daily.

Source: <https://www.niams.nih.gov/health-topics/acne>

